Lesson 5: How to Create a Customized Retro Wallpaper

In this tutorial, we're going to create a Stylish Retro Wallpaper that is unique to your own monitor. To start this lesson, all you need to do is first find out your monitor's resolution and then create a New Document with those specifics.

What's great about this lesson is that it's both simple to understand, beautiful and its process is applicable in creating other, similarly stylized backgrounds.

For this lesson, we'll use the monitor dimensions of the author (3840x2160). Feel free, if you're up to it, to use the dimensions of your own monitor for this lesson. Otherwise, we recommend you do the lesson the way it is and then come back and redo it again.

Let's begin...

  Create a **New Document** to these specifics:

- **Web - CD Digital Release**

- **Width**: **3840** & **Height**: **2160**
- **300 DPI**
- **RGB/8**
- **Transparent background** (*unchecked*)

The first thing we need to do is add a grid to our document so we can make precise effects. This grid will act like an overlay but is as easily removed as it is added.

  Go to the **Menu bar** - **View** - and *click* on **Show Grid**. In the screenshot below we've already clicked on it. You want there to be a checkmark in front of "Show Grid".
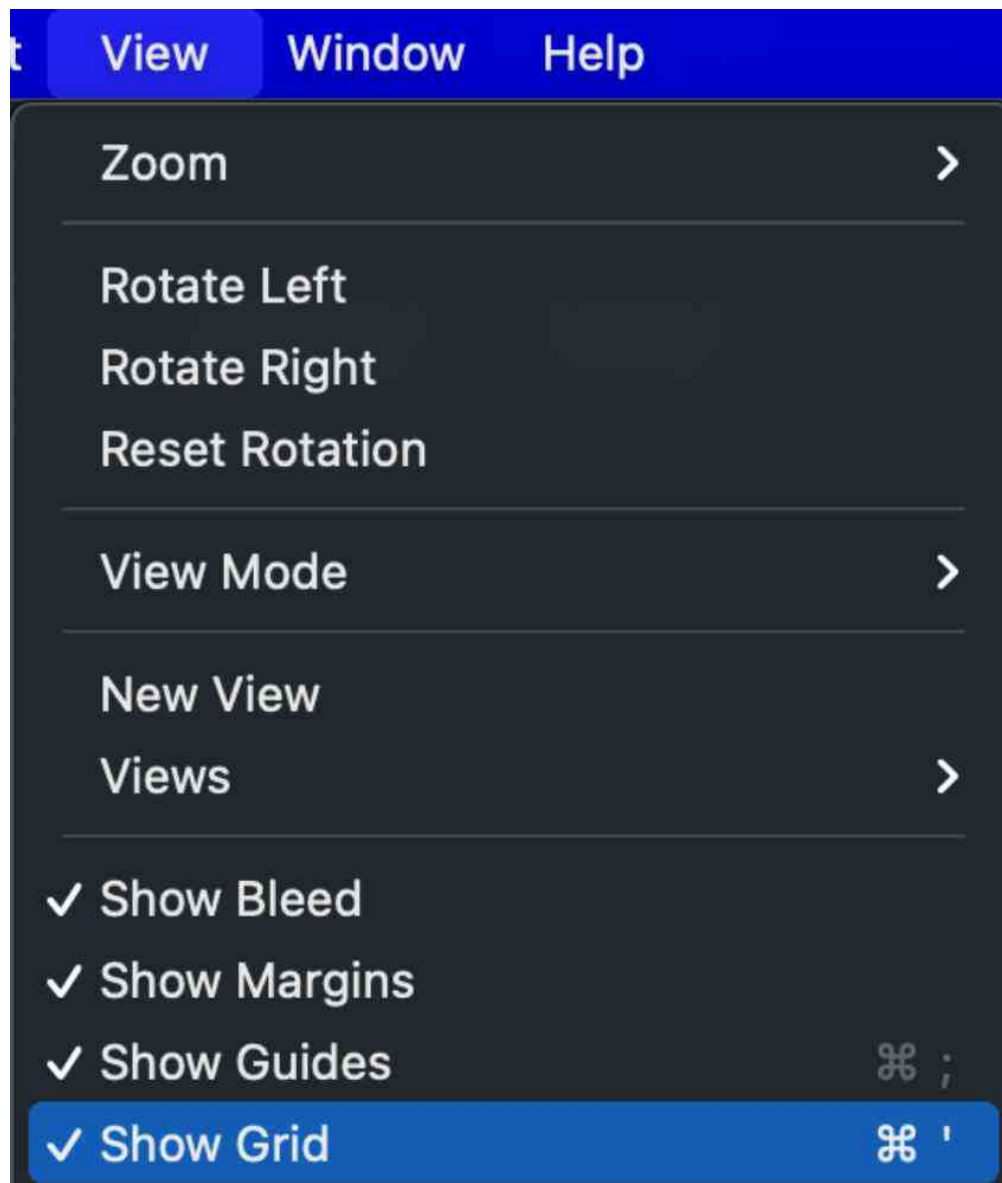
Great. Now that we have a grid overlay on top of our document, let's click on the Grid and Axis Manager so we can adjust the spacing of the square grid lines.

  Go back to the **Menu bar** and *click* on **Grid and Axis Manager...** When you do this a pop-out window will appear where we can make our adjustments to the grid pattern.

Click on the **Basic button** (see the yellow rectangle in the below image).

Set the **Spacing** to **192 px** (see the white rectangle). This is because we divided the horizontal pixels 3840 by 20, resulting in 192. This will give us 20 squares running across our document. It's just easier than not doing this division. So, when you set up your own background, also divide your Width pixels by 20.

*Press* **Close** when done (see the green rectangle in the below image).
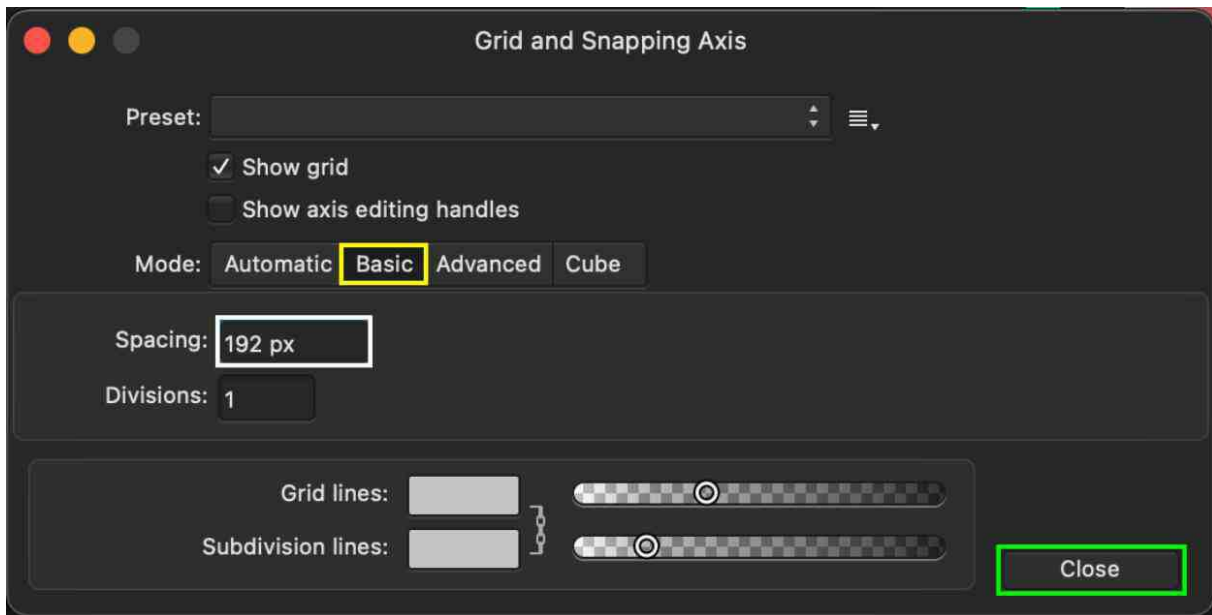
Next, we're going to make triangles running across the top of our document, which we'll turn into our wave pattern in a minute. But first we need to make sure some options are active before we start.

  Go to the **Toolbar** and *click* on the **Snapping button** so it's active. You know it's active because its button will be depressed (or darkened). We placed a yellow rectangle over the Snapping button in the image below.

Now, we need to *click* on the **Snapping menu icon** (see the small white rectangle to the right of the yellow rectangle) to open its pop-out window. In this window, we have many choices to choose from on how we want Snapping to work. Because we are using a grid, we need to have the Snapping apply to the grid.

  Check the **Snap to grid** box on (see the red rectangle in the below image) so this will happen when we work with the grid overlay on our document.
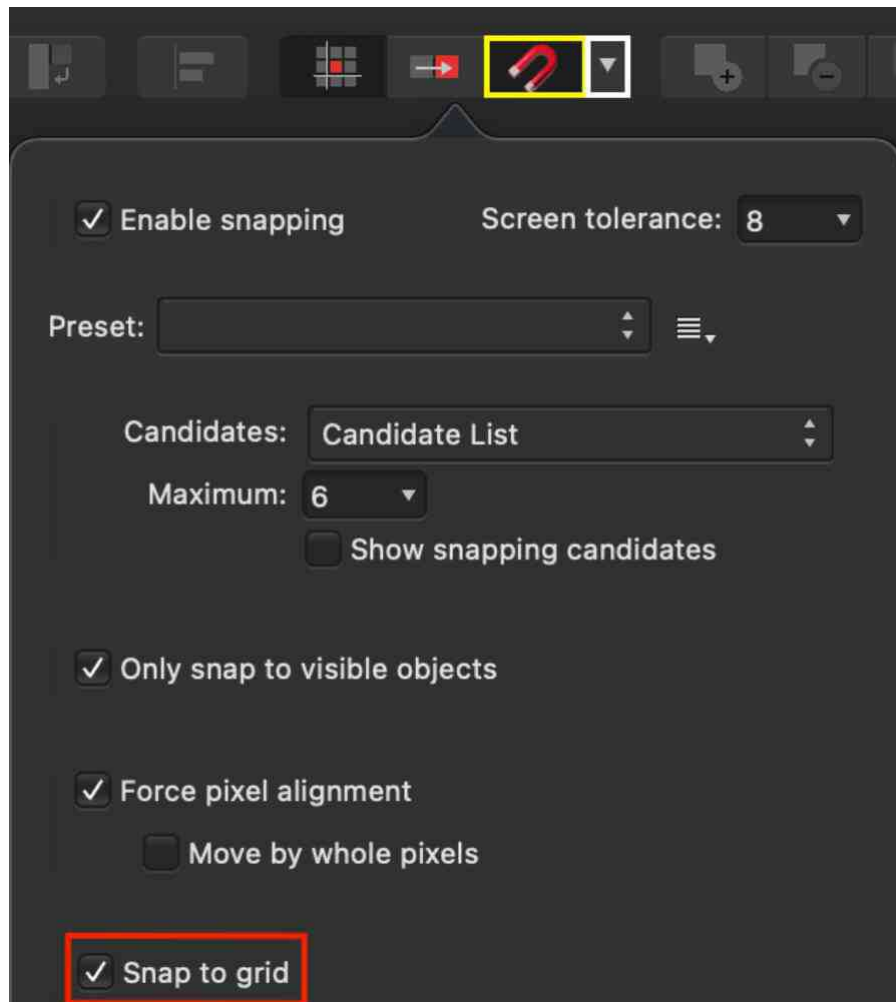
Click on the **Pen Tool** so it's active.
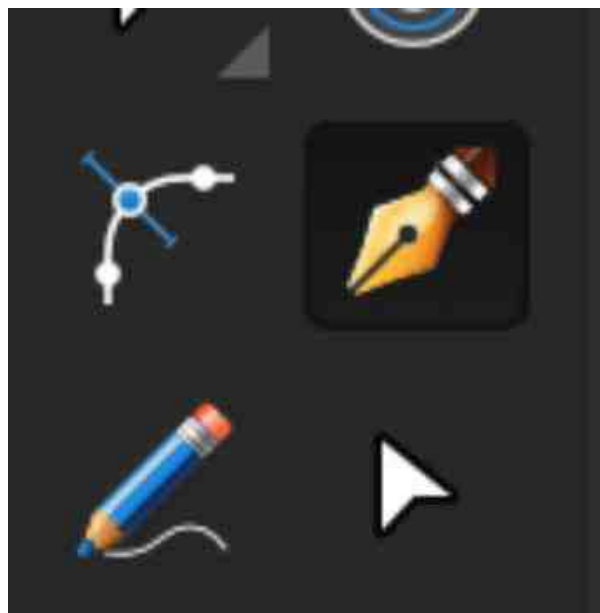
Now that we have our Pen Tool active and Snapping is set up just the way we want it, let's start creating our pattern.

We'll be creating an up & down pattern across the top of our document using the grid lines as guides. We'll start in the top-left corner and space out our lines by a full two grid squares (see image below).

Try to make you ups & down marks look like the image below.
This is what the colored rectangles mean:

- **Black**: Starting & finishing point
- **Yellow**: You need to extend the ups & downs one time into the canvas area
- **White**: Extend the points outside & above the document to come back to the finishing point.

Note: One thing we didn't do in the white rectangle area is hold-down the Shift key while we made our clicks outside the document. If we had, then they would've been perfectly in line with one another. You can see that our top horizontal line is not straight. When you extend the Pen Tool's points outside the document, perfection isn't necessary.
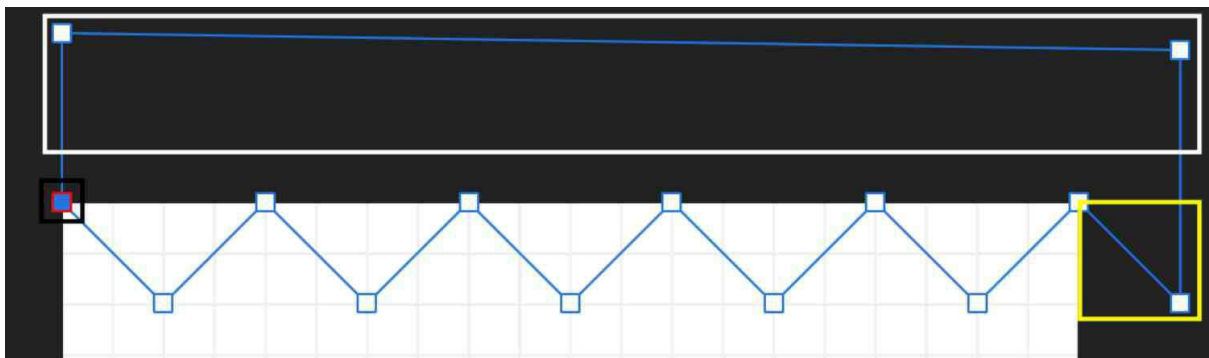

By having our pattern run off the edge, it will allow is to move our pattern a little to the right or left later on, without our pattern ending abruptly.

We're done with the grid overlay, so let's get rid of it. To do this...

 Go to the **Menu bar - View -** and *click* on **Show Grid**. This will remove the checkmark before it thereby removing its effect. If you go back to the **Menu bar - View**, you'll see what we mean.

Now, we're going to round our sharp edges, so our design has a wavy look. Designer makes this remarkably simple.

   *Click* on the **Corner Tool** so it's active (its shortcut is **C**).
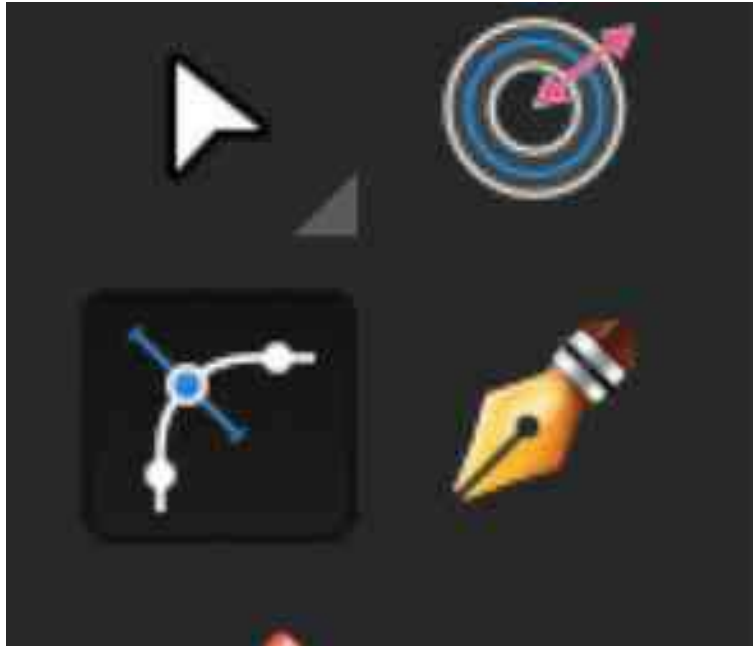
   Hover your **cursor** over the document and *press* **Ctrl**/**Cmd**+**A** to *select all* points in the document. When you do this, every point will turn into a blue square with a circle around them (see the below image to see this effect).

   Choose any of the **bottom-most nodes** and before you do the next step, think about what we're going to do.

We're using a tool that changes sharp corners into smooth curves. This is done by starting with the cursor below the sharp angle of a corner and then with a click & drag motion we'll drag the angled corner upwards. Because all of the Pen Tool nodes are active, all corners will change when we change one.

This is what part of our document looks like right before we use the Corner Tool. Here you can see the square nodes.
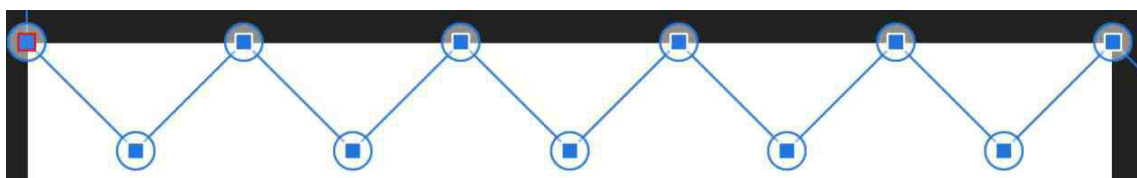
Position the **cursor** under one of the bottom nodes and *click & drag* **upwards** creating a nice curve. When you do this, it will look very strange. The curved line will be in-between the circles (see image below).
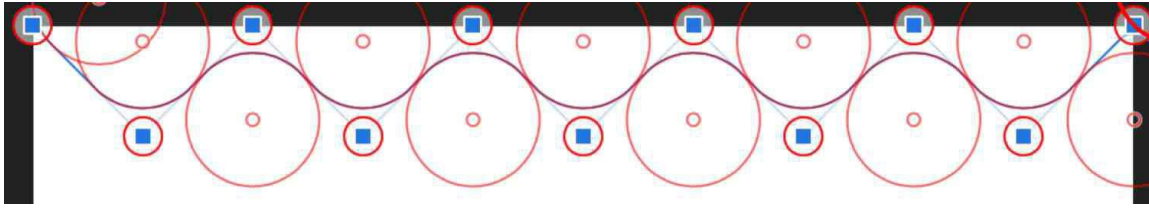
Note: Take your time learning this new technique. *Press* **Ctrl**/**Cmd**+**Z** to *undo* your use of the Corner Tool and try again & again. Redo this as many times as you want until you get a good feel for it.

Click on the **Move Tool** when you're done. This will reveal our curvy line without any nodes around them.
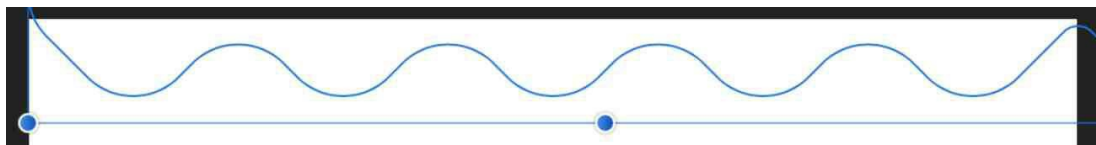
So, let's talk about what we're going to do now at this stage of the effect. We're going to take the shape and duplicate it down the screen in increments of 200 pixels. We'll change the color of each curvy shape as we proceed down the document. In addition to duplicating the shapes, we'll reposition their layers in the Layers Panel, so the newer shape layer is below its copied shape.

For the colors, I want you all to experiment with six colors. Go to your favorite search engine and do this search "color palette six colors". I did a Google Image search and found a ton of palettes with six colors. It's important to use colors that work well with each other.

Here are the six colors I found, and we'll use them for this lesson. But I highly recommend you find your own colors and make your design unique to you.

Here are the six Hex codes:

1. **#FD0100**
2. **#F76915**

3. **#EEDE04**
4. **#A0D636**
5. **#2FA236**
6. **#333ED4**

Just like we did in the previous lesson, we need to open the Colors Panel to the Sliders window. Follow the steps you've already learnt to open this window up. Because our first wavy shape is already selected, all we have to do is input the first RGB Hex code into its value box.

Type **FD0100** in the Hex value box (see the yellow rectangle in the below image).
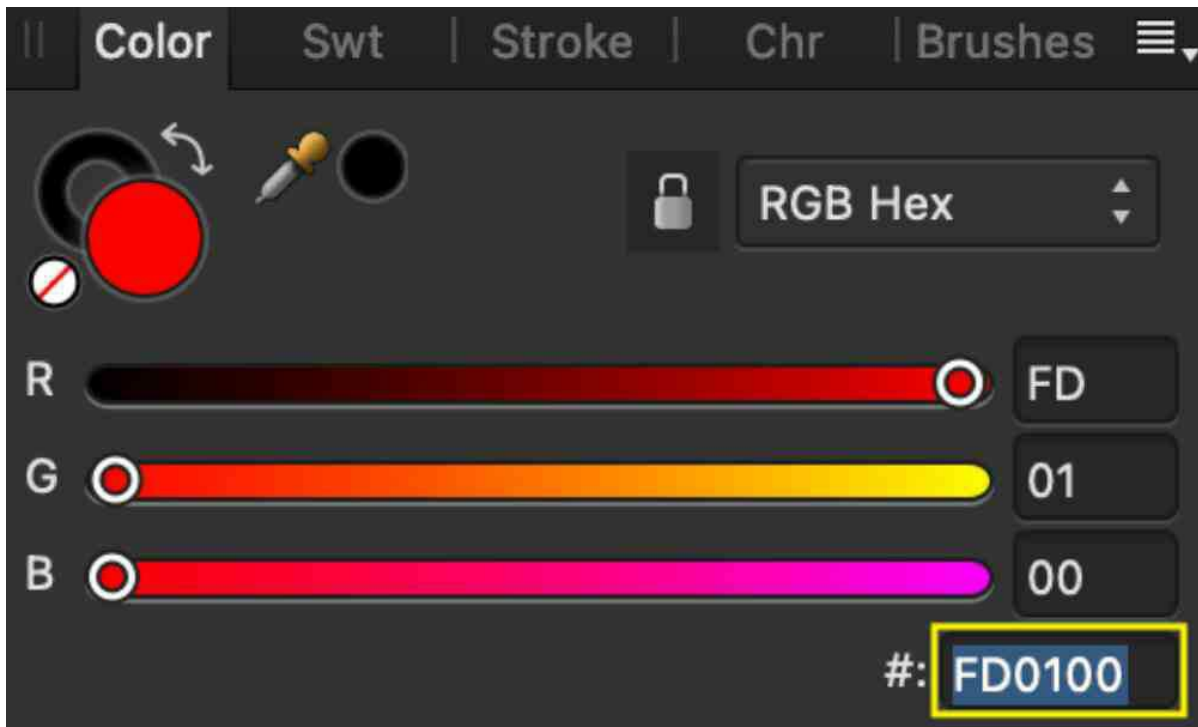
Now, we're going to duplicate our curvy shape and move the duplicate down the page. We could move the duplicated shape down the page with our mouse cursor, but there's a more precise way, so we'll do that.

Our first layer should look like this below image. It needs to be active and highlighted in blue before we move on to the next step.
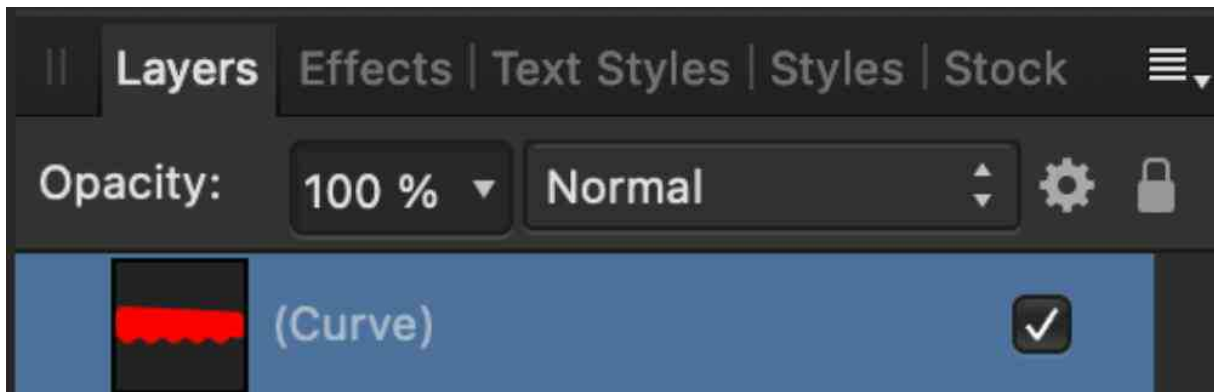
Press **Ctrl**/**Cmd+J** to *duplicate* the layer.

Go to the **Color Panel** and *type* **F76915** in its Hex value box.

Click on the **top layer** & *drag* it **below the original layer** (see the yellow arrow for this action). When we duplicate a layer, the new layer will be stacked on top of the original layer. What comes first is at the bottom.
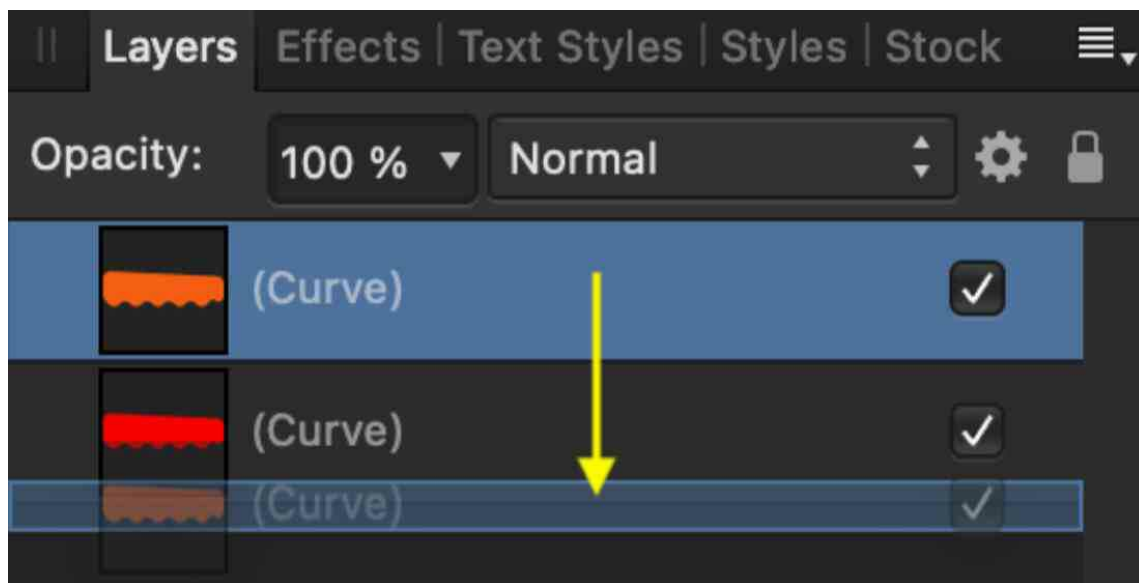

Note: The reason we colored the duplicated layer before we moved it is because we can see which layer we want to move by looking in the Preview Thumbnail (the little square window on the left-side of every layer). This window is very important the more skillful you become at Designer and Affinity Photo.

Now, we're going to reposition the duplicated curvy shape exactly 300 pixels down from the first curvy shape. To do this...

Go to the **Transform panel** in the lower right-hand corner of the screen.

Click in the **Y: axis value box** to the right of **960 px** and *type* **+300** (see the yellow rectangle in the below image).

*Press* the **Return key** and watch how the new curvy layer drops down below the original curvy shape.
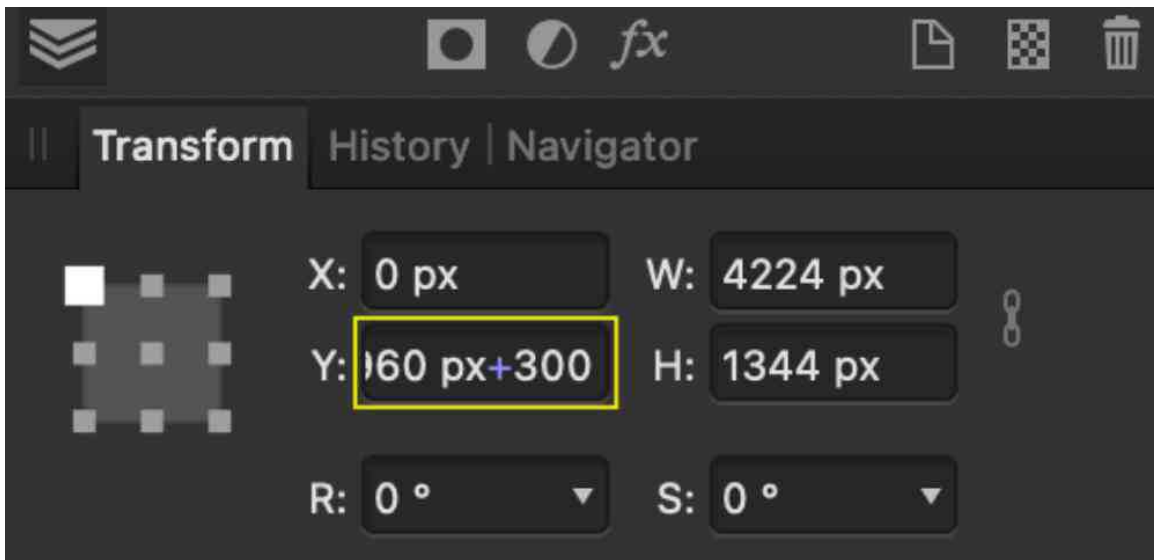
Ok. That's how we color the new duplicated shape and move it down 300 pixels. Now, we need to repeat these steps four more times.

Follow these steps as you do this:

- *Duplicate* the **lowest layer**.
- *Change* its **color** using the Hex codes.
- *Move* this **duplicated layer** to the bottom of the Layers Panel.
- *Type* **+300** in the Y-axis value box next to the number that's already inside it.

Note: As you do this process something cool might happen. The new duplicated shape will automatically move down 300 pixels without you having to type +300 each time. This is called Power Duplicating. We wrote "might" because for some reason this extra feature doesn't always work. If your layers don't automatically move downward, simply continue to type +300 in the Y-axis value box.

This is what our Layers Panel looks like after all six layers are complete.
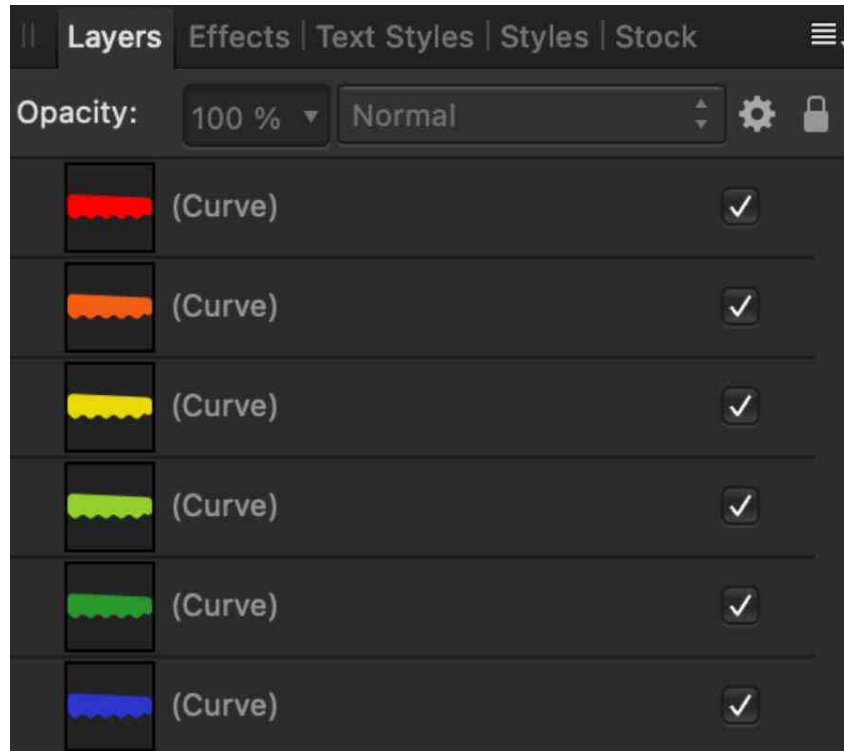
There is a white area at the bottom of our document, and we'd like it to be black. We'll use the tried-and-true method of changing the color of all documents. Remember how to do this because it is probably the most-used technique for recoloring all documents in both Designer & Photo.

  Click on the **Rectangle Tool** and *click* & *drag* a **rectangle** over the entire document. Its color will be the same as the last color we used. So, it'll be a nice blue.

Remember to keep this rectangle shape as close to the border of our document as possible.

  Go to the **Colors Panel** and *double-click* on the **Fill circle** (see the yellow square in the below image). This will open the Color Chooser pop-out window.
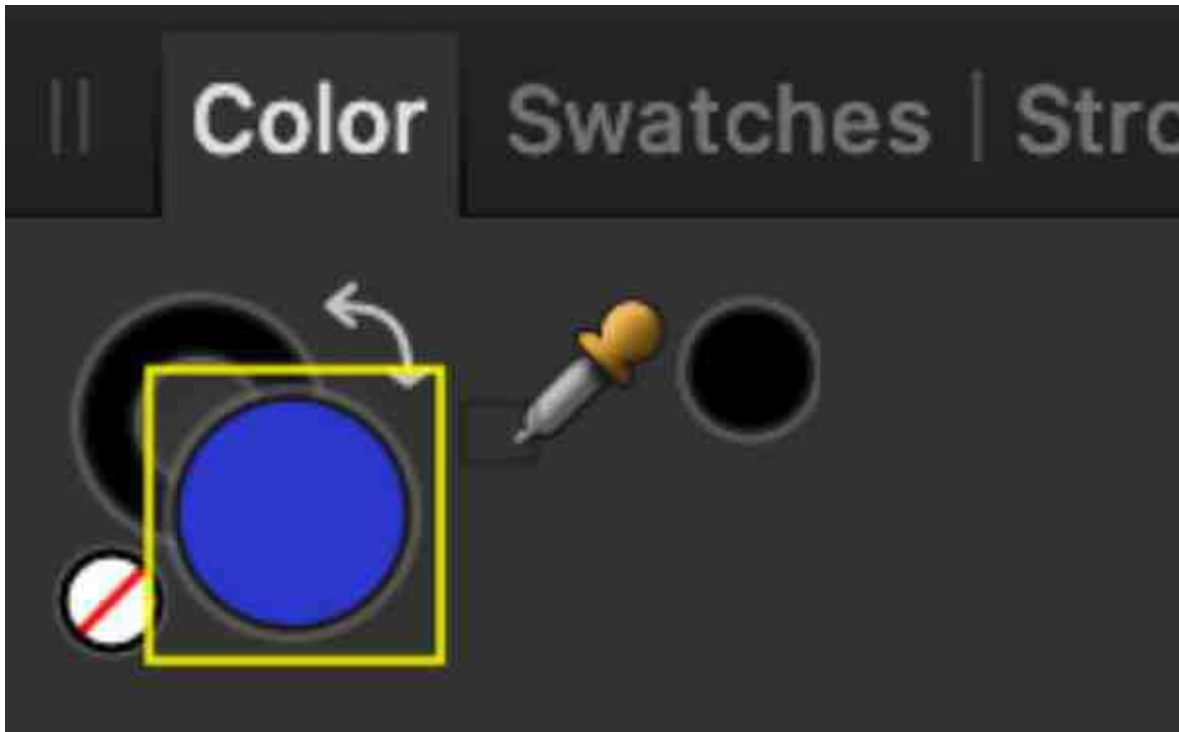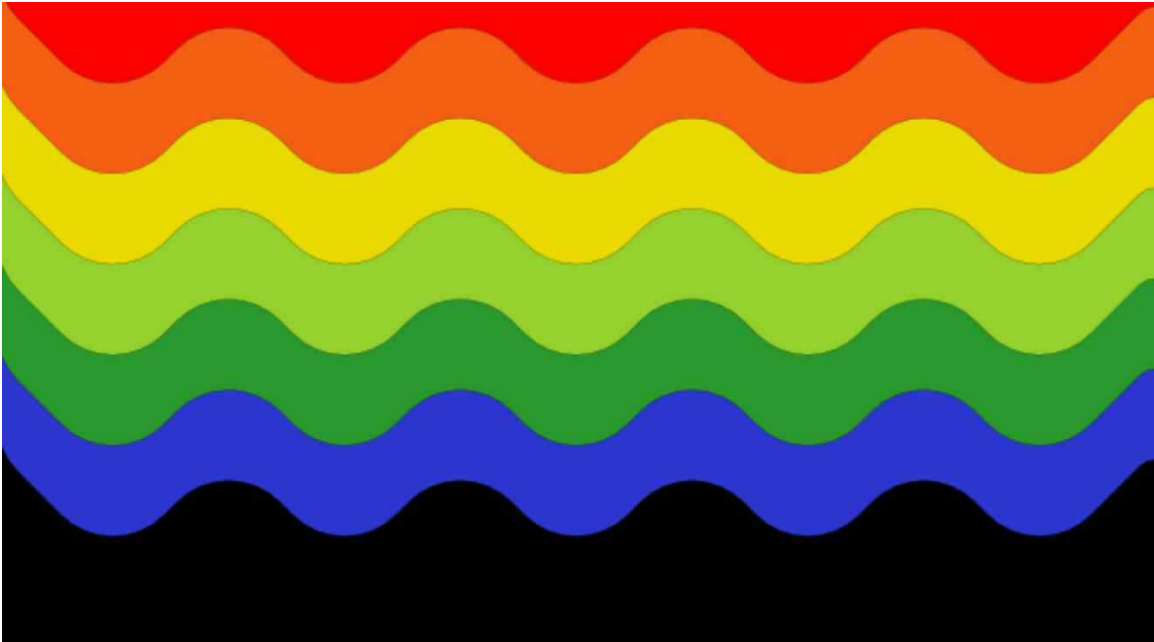
Click & *drag* the **inner color node** to the black area. This will change the rectangle's color to black.
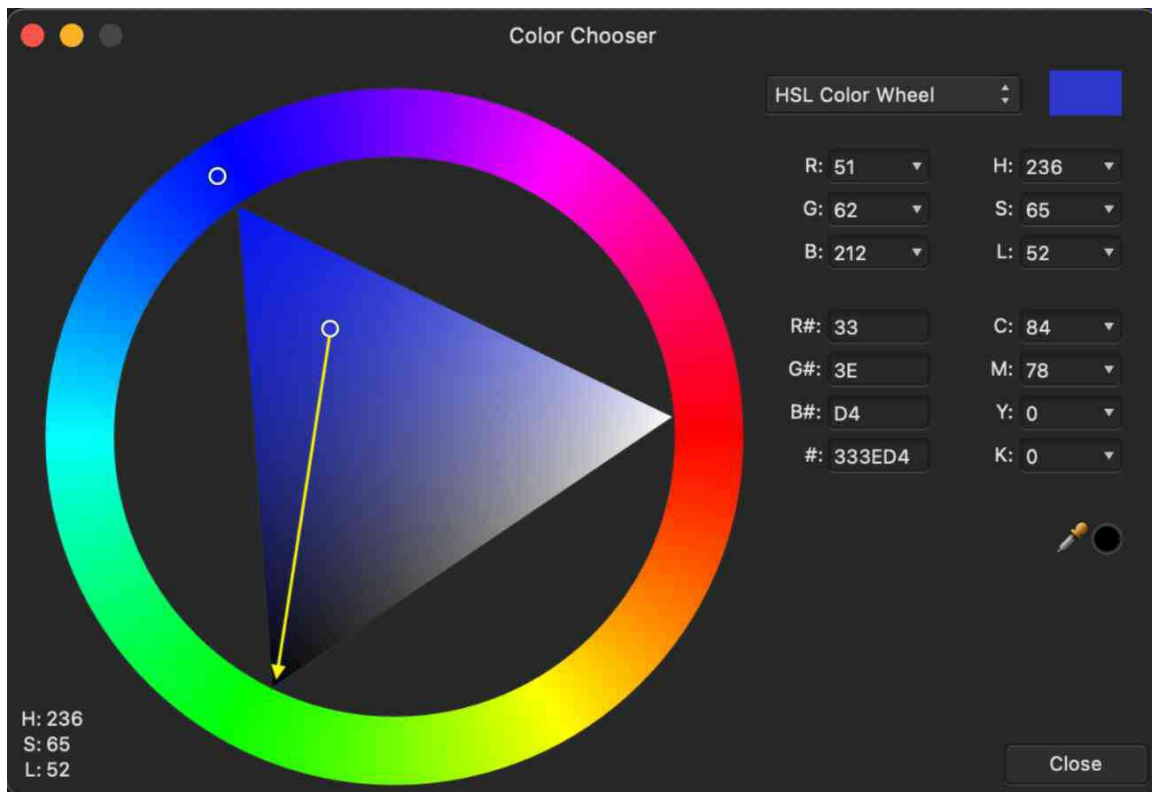
Go back to the **Layers Panel** and *click* & *drag* the top black **rectangle layer** to the bottom of the Layers Stack (see yellow arrow for this action).
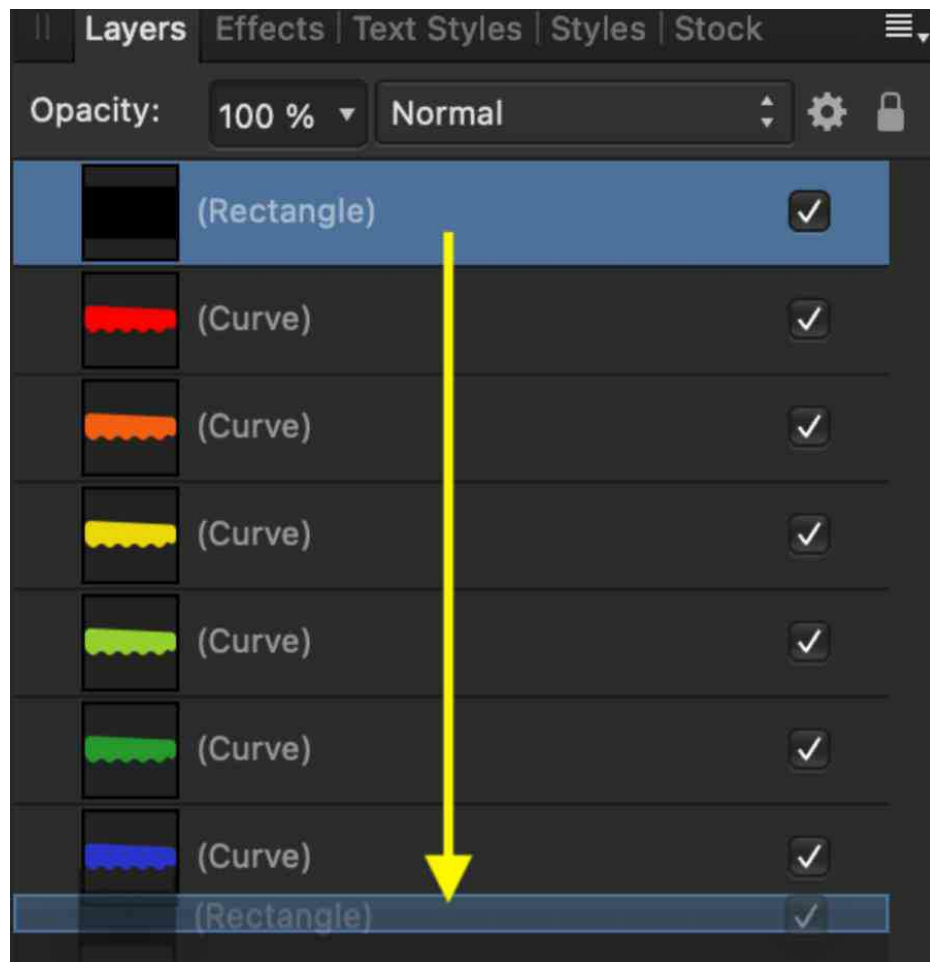
This is what our document looks like now.

Our document is looking great, but there's one more thing we're going to do to it to give it an even better appearance.

  Go to the **Layers Panel** and *click* on the **top layer** so it's highlighted in blue.

  Hold-down the **Shift key** and *click* on the **lowest layer**. This will cause all of the layers to become selected and highlighted in blue.

  Go to the **icon bar** located above the Transform Panel and *click* on the **Layers Effects** (*fx*) icon. When you click on this, it pop-out window will appear.
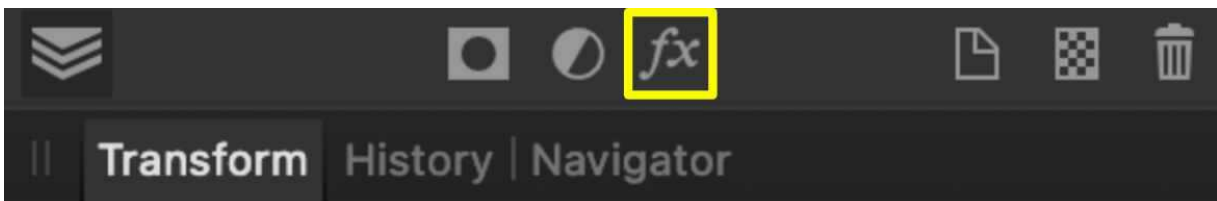
Go through this pop-out window and make the same changes we made. We added several colored rectangles to mark the options you need to adjust:
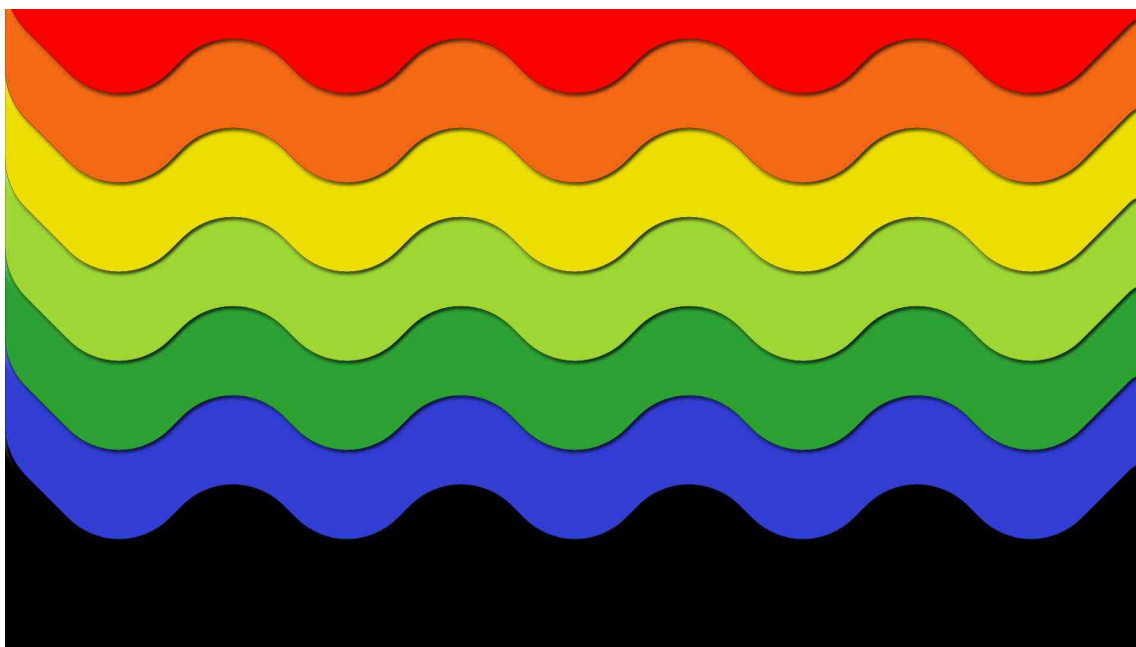
- **Blue**: *Click* on **Bevel/Emboss** so it's highlighted in blue (shown). Then, *click* on its **checkmark**. Both have to be done.
- **Yellow**: *Change* the **Type** from **Pillow** to **Outer**.
- **White**: *Change* the **Radius** to **18 px**.

- **Pink**: *Change* the **Soften** effect to **5 px**.
- **Green**: *Press* **Close** to set these effects.
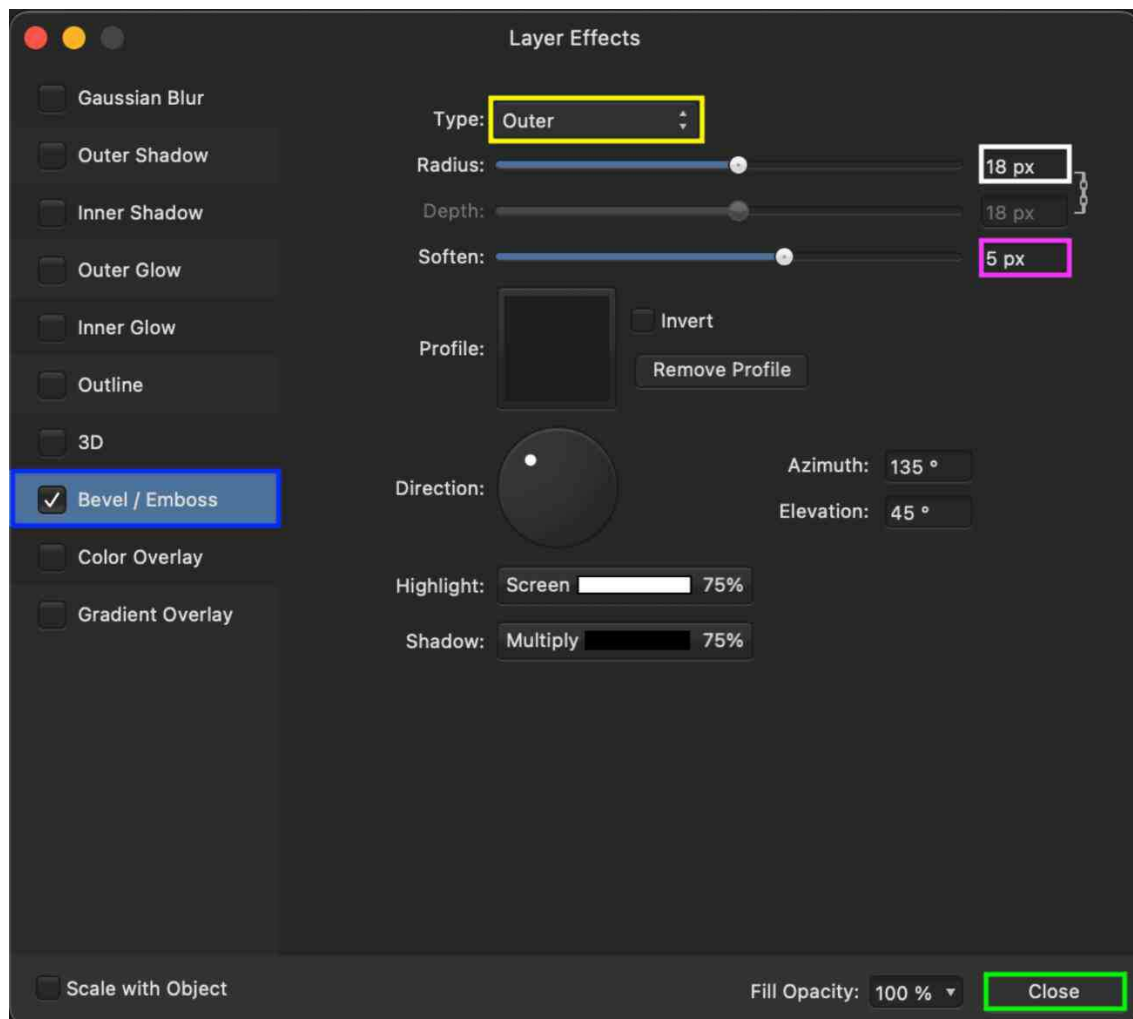
Done. This is our final document. Notice how much nicer the Layer Effects made our document appear. How would you describe this change? We think it gives it a 3D look.

Finished. This ends this lesson.